

REMARKS

Claims 1-5, 9, 13, and 17 are withdrawn from further consideration by the examiner. Claims 6-8, 10-12 and 14-16 remain in the application.

Claims 6-8, 10-12 and 14-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Timmons et al. (US 2004/0088190). The rejection is overcome by the present amendments to the claims requiring, in combination, an expense management apparatus including an expense master database storing expense master information for each business partner as further detailed below.

The amended claims are directed to an expense management system comprising a number of elements in combination. In representative claim 6, for example, the claimed combination includes a business partner terminal apparatus and an expense management apparatus. The business partner terminal apparatus sends invoice information and debit note information that is generated based on the invoice information. The expense management apparatus manages the invoice information and the debit note information sent from the business partner terminal apparatus. The expense management apparatus includes an expense master database, calculation means and accuracy determination means. The expense master database stores expense master information for each business partner. The calculation means calculates debit information based on the invoice information sent from the business partner terminal apparatus and on the stored expense master information of a business partner associated with the business partner terminal apparatus. The accuracy determination means compares the calculated debit information obtained by the calculation means and the debit note information sent from the business partner terminal apparatus, and determines whether the debit note information sent from the business partner terminal apparatus corresponds to the calculated debit information.

In other words, the claims define a combination which enables one to (1) calculate debit information based on invoice information and stored expense master information for a business partner, (2) compare the calculated debit information and actual “debit note information” (i.e., the information that is on the actual debit note itself), and (3) determine whether the actual “debit note

information” corresponds to the “calculated debit information.” Stated somewhat differently, the claimed combination enables a comparison between debit note information actually on a debit note and calculated debit information calculated by a calculation means.

A similar combination is neither disclosed nor suggested in Timmons.

Paragraph 0006 of Timmons describes a health care facility that compares an invoice to the health care facility's records. Timmons teaches a comparison between information present on an invoice and information present on a health care facility record. There is no teaching or suggestion in Timmons of a combination which includes calculation means for calculating debit information based on invoice information and stored expense master information of a business partner. There is no teaching or suggestion of a combination which includes accuracy determination means for comparing the calculated debit information obtained by the calculation means and the debit note information.

Paragraph 0018 of Timmons describes a health care facility that “examines” the charges listed on an invoice and compares them to their records. Again, Timmons teaches a comparison between information present on an invoice and information present on a health care facility record. There is no teaching or suggestion in Timmons of a combination which includes calculation means for calculating debit information based on invoice information sent from the business partner terminal apparatus and stored expense master information of the business partner. There is no teaching or suggestion of a combination which includes accuracy determination means for comparing the calculated debit information obtained by the calculation means and the debit note information sent from the business partner terminal apparatus.

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the outstanding rejection of the claims and to pass this application to issue. If it is determined that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number given below.

In the event the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicant petitions for any required relief including extensions of time and authorizes the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to **Deposit Account No. 03-1952** referencing docket no. **116692005300**.

Dated: April 15, 2009

Respectfully submitted,

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